

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 719  
By Fitzhugh

A RESOLUTION to honor and commend the 2003 TSSAA Class  
AA State Baseball Champions, the Tigers of  
Ripley High School.

WHEREAS, baseball has long been an important sport in the community of Ripley,  
Tennessee; for countless years, youth and adults have spent many joyful hours playing and  
watching America's pastime; and

WHEREAS, numerous Ripley Youth League teams over the years have made strong  
showings in local, regional and state tournaments; the exceptional facilities located at Ripley  
Park provide an outstanding environment for quality participation; and

WHEREAS, the acumen and dedication of coaches at all levels in the Ripley community  
are without peer; the support of parents and fans provides positive reinforcement to the  
participants and teaches them valuable lessons of life, sportsmanship and fair play; and

WHEREAS, Ripley High School has long been a leader in high school athletics and has  
especially excelled in baseball; and

WHEREAS, the Tigers play at storied C.M. Kelly Field, on the campus of Ripley High School, long regarded as one of the premier playing fields in all of Tennessee; this exceptional stadium has been recognized as a top venue for baseball and has garnered many regional and statewide awards; and

WHEREAS, such a magnificent facility and field are only eclipsed by the caliber and success of those playing on it; and

WHEREAS, the administration of Ripley High School, including Principal Bobby Baker and Assistant Principals, Bum Bardy Driver and Joe Bridges, along with all the students and faculty, strongly support the outstanding Tiger baseball program; and

WHEREAS, under the expert and positive leadership of Head Coach Joe Bridges and the experienced and able leadership of Assistant Coaches Stephen Byrd and Ryan Whiteside, the Tigers have gained the reputation of being one of the most outstanding high school teams in all of West Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, after achieving an incredible 28-11-1 record in 2003 regular season play, including finishing as runners-up in the Aaron Schuh Memorial Classic and as Champions of the Jim Tatum Memorial Tournament in Dyersburg, the Tigers prepared themselves to do battle in the very tough District 14 Tournament; and

WHEREAS, after a strong District challenge, the Tigers emerged as runners-up and were on their way to a Regional Tournament berth; travelling to Dyer County, Ripley defeated a scrappy Dyer County Choctaw squad 6-3, and earned a place in the Regional Finals against the Tornadoes of Union City; and

WHEREAS, again playing in unfamiliar territory, the Tigers claimed the title of Regional Champions by crushing Union City 9-5; and

WHEREAS, in the Tigers' first ever Sectional playoff contest, Ripley faced the Region 8 runner-up, Raleigh-Egypt of Memphis; the Pharaohs met the Tigers in the Sectional Final at

C.M. Kelly Field, and in a game shortened by near tornadic conditions, the Ripley Tigers scraped and clawed their way to a Sectional Championship; and

WHEREAS, the Tennessee Secondary School Athletic Association for the first time in history held its annual Spring Fling in Memphis, including the Class AA State Baseball Championships; and

WHEREAS, in their inaugural trip to this statewide affair, the Tigers faced Greenbrier, with a 26-8 record, as their first opponent at USA Stadium in Millington; the Tigers continued their winning ways by defeating the Bobcats in an extra-inning contest, 14-6, the first state tournament win in school history; and

WHEREAS, Round Two brought perennial powerhouse Marshall County to a new venue, Briarcrest High School in Shelby County, to face the victorious Tigers; Ripley continued their championship march in a close, hard-fought game, which they won by a score of 4-2; and

WHEREAS, advancing to the Final Four in the State Championship Tournament, the Tigers were paired against Seymour, a quality team from East Tennessee; and

WHEREAS, returning to USA Stadium, the Tigers once again claimed the victory; Seymour was sent home reeling from a 7-1 loss at the hands of the now mighty felines; and

WHEREAS, the championship game was set, the Ripley Tigers would meet fellow West Tennessee school Jackson South Side at the University of Memphis' Nat Buring Stadium for the Class AA State Baseball Championship crown; and

WHEREAS, after having Ripley's winningest season ever, advancing to the State Tournament for the first time, and taking the Regional and Sectional titles, the following team members were poised to compete in their first ever State Championship Game: 2 Brent Lankford, 3 Tom Fitzhugh, 5 Keithan Currie, 7 Daniel Turner, 8 Clint Conrad, 9 Austin Maxwell, 11 Danny Joe Edenfield, 12 Jonathan Mitchell, 13 Stephen Wilson, 14 Garrett Pipkin, 15 Dustin Braden, 16 Matt Cozart, 17 Blake McAdams, 18 Ben Wilder, 20 Clayton Kiestler, 21 Chris Glass, 25 Steven Rhodes, 27 Tyler Pattat, 28 Rodney Steward, 30 Josh Butler, 32 Justin

Garrett, 36 Jerry Shackelford, 38 Kyle Vickery, 34 Matt Powers, 40 Bradley Younger and 42 Roger Leake; and

WHEREAS, under perfect nighttime conditions, with Ripley fans packing the stands and outnumbering the opposing fans 3 to 1, the Tigers played masterful baseball and at 10:00 p.m. on Friday, May 23, 2003, victoriously held the State Championship Trophy high, after defeating Jackson South Side 6-4; and

WHEREAS, the squad's 35-11-1 record brought home the first state title ever accomplished by a Ripley High School athletic team; and

WHEREAS, these young men displayed ability, character, teamwork and perseverance, and with the help of their coaches, parents, Tiger Booster Club members, fellow students and supporters, singularly placed their school and their community on the State of Tennessee Baseball Map forever; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED THIRD GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we hereby honor and commend the players and coaches of the 2003 TSSAA Class AA State Champion Baseball Team of Ripley High School and wish them continued success in all their future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate number of copies of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.